

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 SS-15 INSE-00
VO-03 CA-01 SP-02 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
INRE-00 DODE-00 L-03 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 PA-02
ICAE-00 DOTE-00 SSO-00 /070 R

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DRAFTED BY:HA/ORM:JBROH-KAHN:BA

APPROVED BY:HA/ORM:SCLAWMAN

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O 200227Z MAY 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 126598

FOL BANGKOK 14019 SENT ACTION SECSTATE MAY 17, 1978 REPEATED
TO YOU QUOTE

UNCLAS BANGKOK 14019

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJ: CONTINENTAL AIRLINES PROPOSAL TO HANDLE TRANSPORTATION
OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES

FOR HA/ORM

REF: BANGKOK 12853

1. SUMMARY: CONTINENTAL AIRLINES MAY 15 SUBMITTED THE
FOLLOWING PROPOSAL TO HANDLE THE TRANSPORTATION OF INDO-
CHINESE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES.
CONTINENTAL WOULD HANDLE ALL THE FUNCTIONS THAT ICEM
NOW COVERS EXCEPT MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS. THERE WOULD
BE NO CHARGE TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR CONTINENTAL'S
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SERVICES EXCEPT FOR COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATIONS NEEDED
TO NOTIFY INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES OF
ARRIVAL INFORMATION. COMMENT ON THE PROPOSAL FOLLOWS
IN SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY

2. GENERAL OUTLINES OF CONTINENTAL'S PROPOSAL FOLLOW:

A. THE MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES IS ABOUT TO REACH A HIGH LEVEL AND WITH THE CONCERN OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE WELFARE OF INDO-CHINA REFUGEES, THERE IS A CRITICAL NEED FOR THE EFFICIENT SUPERVISION OF REFUGEE TRAVEL TO AMERICA. CONTINENTAL AIRLINES HAS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH REFUGEES IN 1975, AND WITH ICEM IN 1976, AND WE OFFER OUR ASSISTANCE TO THE REFUGEE SECTION AND ICEM TO MAKE ALL ARRANGEMENTS FOR REFUGEE TRAVEL FROM THE TRANSIT CENTER IN BANGKOK TO THE FINAL DESTINATION CITY IN THE UNITED STATES; AND TO DO THIS AT NO COST TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT EXCEPT FOR THE COST OF THE REFUGEE'S AIRLINE TICKET.

B. IN 1976, AT A TIME WHEN THERE WAS GREAT DIFFICULTY OBTAINING SPACE FOR REFUGEES TRAVELING ACROSS THE PACIFIC, CONTINENTAL AIRLINES ESTABLISHED AN OFFICE NEAR THE ICEM HEADQUARTERS IN BANGKOK, BROUGHT OUT EXPERIENCED EMPLOYEES FROM THE UNITED STATES, AND WORKED WITH ICEM TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS THAT OVERCAME THE SHORTAGE OF SEATS AND SUCCESSFULLY MOVED LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES TO THE UNITED STATES. NOW WITH REFUGEE MOVEMENTS REACHING A PEAK UNDER THE 1977 PROGRAM, WITH A NEW 1978 PROGRAM ABOUT TO START, AND WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE NORTHWEST AIRLINES STRIKE; THERE IS AGAIN A SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF AIRLINE SPACE ACROSS THE PACIFIC.

C. CONTINENTAL AIRLINES IS PREPARED TO ASSIST THE
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REFUGEE SECTION AS OUTLINED IN THE ATTACHED PROPOSAL. THE SERVICES OFFERED IN THIS PROPOSAL WOULD SAVE THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY REFUGEE SECTION, ICEM, AND THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, TIME, MANPOWER, AND MONEY. IN ADDITION, THERE IS A FACTOR IN OUR PROPOSAL THAT EXCEEDS EFFICIENCY IN IMPORTANCE; THE PRIMARY CONCERN OF OUR COMPANY TO ASSIST REFUGEE PASSENGERS AND TO MAKE THEIR TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE.

3. SPECIFIC ITEMS OF THE PROPOSAL FOLLOW:

A. TICKET ALL REFUGEES TRAVELING FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES BOTH ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES.

B. MAKE ALL AIRLINE RESERVATIONS AND WORK WITH ALL AIRLINES TO OBTAIN SPACE NECESSARY TO MOVE REFUGEE PASSENGERS TO THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT DELAY.

C. MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO MOVE REFUGEE PASSENGERS FROM THE TRANSIT CENTER IN BANGKOK TO DON MUANG AIRPORT, TO HANDLE THEIR DEPARTURE FORMALITIES AT THE AIRPORT, AND TO WORK WITH AIRPORT OFFICIALS TO INSURE THAT THE

PROCESSING OF REFUGEES IS HANDLED PROPERLY AND WITHOUT HARDSHIP TO THE REFUGEES.

D. MAKE AVAILABLE THE CONTINENTAL AIRLINES BANGKOK AIRPORT OFFICE TO THE STAFF OF THE U.S. EMBASSY REFUGEE SECTION AND ICEM. (THE OFFICE IS LOCATED ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE AIRPORT DEPARTURE HALL NEXT TO THE CHECK-IN COUNTERS AND WAS USED BY ICEM IN 1976).

E. CHECK THE PAPERWORK ACCOMPANYING EACH REFUGEE PASSENGER TO INSURE THAT THEY HAVE THE PROPER DOCUMENTS TO TRAVEL, TO TRANSIT FOREIGN COUNTRIES, AND TO BE ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES.

F. BOOK SPACE FOR REFUGEE PASSENGERS TRAVELING ON DOMESTIC AIRLINES AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS POSSIBLE SO THAT A REFUGEE WILL NOT BE DELAYED IN THAILAND, AND IF POSSI-
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BLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SPECIAL LOW FARES WHICH OFFER UP TO A 40 PERCENT SAVINGS FROM THE REGULAR ECONOMY FARE WITH NO REDUCTION IN THE QUALITY OF SERVICE.

G. CHECK AIRLINE TARIFFS PUBLISHED AND FILED WITH THE CAB TO INSURE THAT THE LOWEST LEGAL FARES ARE USED FOR REFUGEE TRAVEL. (OFTEN AIRLINE FARES LISTED IN TRADE PUBLICATIONS; SUCH AS THE ABC AND OAG ARE ACCEPTED WITHOUT CHECKING THE ACTUAL TARIFFS. SOMETIMES FARES LISTED IN TRADE PUBLICATIONS ARE NOT CURRENT OR ACCURATE, AND THEY ARE NOT THE OFFICIAL SOURCE FOR FARES).

H. HAVE INSTANT ACCESS TO THE CONTINENTAL AIRLINES SONIC RESERVATIONS SYSTEM FROM OUR BANGKOK OFFICE AND ARRANGE FOR PERSONNEL IN OUR LOS ANGELES RESERVATIONS CENTER TO WORK IN COORDINATION WITH OUR STAFF IN BANGKOK TO INSURE THAT ALL RESERVATIONS REQUESTS RECEIVED FROM BANGKOK FOR SPACE ON ANY AIRLINES WILL BE ANSWERED IN MINIMUM TIME. IF THE BANGKOK OFFICE WERE OPEN FROM 0800 TO 1900 BANGKOK TIME, PERSONNEL IN THE LOS ANGELES OFFICE WOULD WORK THE SAME SCHEDULE BASED ON THE TIME DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE TWO OFFICES. (IN 1976, THE ABILITY OF CONTINENTAL AIRLINES TO OBTAIN QUICK CONFIRMATION OF AIRLINE RESERVATIONS ON ALL DOMESTIC AIRLINES WAS HELPFUL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE 1976 PROGRAM AND GAVE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES MAXIMUM TIME TO NOTIFY SPONSORS IN THE UNITED STATES ABOUT THE ARRIVAL SCHEDULES OF REFUGEE PASSENGERS).

I. KEEP THE U.S. REFUGEE SECTION ADVISED ABOUT ALL AVIATION DEVELOPMENTS; SUCH AS STRIKES, LABOR SLOW DOWNS, CHANGES IN AIRLINE SCHEDULES, FARES AND OTHER MATTERS THAT MIGHT DELAY OR SERIOUSLY UPSET THE MOVEMENT OF REFUGEE PASSENGERS.

J. WRITE INSTRUCTIONS IN A LANGUAGE THE REFUGEE
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PASSENGER CAN READ, (TO BE GIVEN THE PASSENGER BEFORE HE LEAVES THE TRANSIT CENTER), EXPLAINING CAREFULLY WHAT HE CAN EXPECT AS HE TRAVELS TO THE UNITED STATES. INSTRUCTIONS WOULD INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE AIRCRAFT, THE LENGTH OF THE FLIGHT, WHERE LAVATORIES ARE LOCATED, HOW OFTEN MEALS ARE SERVED, WHAT FREE SERVICES ARE OFFERED ON THE FLIGHT, SPECIAL FACILITIES FOR BABIES, ETC.

K. HIRE LOCAL STAFF TO ASSIST THE REFUGEE PASSENGER ON HIS DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND AND IF REQUESTED, ARRANGE FOR A CONTINENTAL AIRLINES REPRESENTATIVE TO WORK IN THE U.S. REFUGEE SECTION OR THE ICEM OFFICE TO ASSIST IN HANDLING ALL TRAVEL PROBLEMS AS THEY DEVELOP.

4. CONCLUSION: ALL OF THE WORK OUTLINED ABOVE WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED AT NO COST OF THE REFUGEE SECTION OR ICEM. IF WE ARE REQUESTED TO ASSIST IN NOTIFYING ALL INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES OF THE ARRIVAL INFORMATION REGARDING EACH REFUGEE, WE WOULD REQUEST REIMBURSEMENT ONLY FOR THE COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATIONS COST INVOLVED, BUT THERE WOULD BE NO CHARGE FOR ANY COMMUNICATIONS COSTS WITH OTHER AIRLINES, OR ANY COMMUNICATIONS COST RELATING TO AIRLINE MATTERS, SUCH AS MAKING AIRLINE RESERVATIONS. WHITEHOUSE UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRANSPORTATION, REFUGEES, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, AIRLINES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE126598
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: KAHN:BA
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780212-0553
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780538/aaaabfml.tel
Line Count: 198
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b56c179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN HA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 12853
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2628818
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONTINENTAL AIRLINES PROPOSAL TO HANDLE TRANSPORTATION OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES FOR HA/ORM
TAGS: SREF, US, CONTINENTAL AIRLINES
To: GENEVA
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b56c179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014